28 April 1876

My dear Maria

you'll be looking for a woman scribble but I have nothing to say except that I am well & very idle – you have had some warm days I am glad to see for your winter has been very severe & long I am afraid you have been a great sufferer altho you always write cheerfully I went yesterday to San Paulo where my large picture is placed, it is a very fine new church but a sad discovery has been made that the rafters in the roof are taking the dry rot – the ceiling is all carved & gilt & it has to be taken down – my picture was suffering from the damp & the priests have removed it up to the council chamber & so preserved it as the black spots have disappeared, I was alarmed for it was sure to be destroyed The Priests were very kind about it & admire it greatly & assured me that they would look well after it – I was well done up for the church is very large & was too much for me

I am losing my strength in walking & am obliged to cab it when I go out, but never alone for I am very nervous – an Italian Lady comes for me every morn. at 11 o'clock & kindly looks after me & gets the cab & so I fare very well but still I am rather shakey –

My painting is the only thing I can keep at without fear & as my sight is excellent & my hand steady I am so far comfortable about myself for decrepitude is sure to come upon me at my age – but I am very comfortable

My good Doctor wants to take me a journey to visit his sister a Lady Abbess 50 miles away but I say no I am not strong enough, but yet I must go this Summer to Pozza as I have had some return of rheumatism but of little duration, the place is free of danger from robbers as there is a troop of 5 soldiers & I am sure not to walk too far as my legs wont carry me – as the waters cured me so I ought every summer to take 10 baths, but I am alone there & it is very dull

I am in hopes of a brother artist coming to live in my house which will be pleasant

my little Theatre goes on well & gets up a play every week— I have had two performances for charities which were well attended— My English friends came altho they could not understand Italian but the acting was so spirited that they were well pleased— The actors never learn their parts but the prompter reads it all in a low voice & so the actors catch it up—

How lucky I was to get this society to make a Theatre for my rent was doubled, the Doctor & the actors pay 3/4 of the rent so I am well off as the rents are raised all over Rome

I ended in every thing there is a rise. I wanted to go to Tivoli which formerly cost 3 crowns, now it cost 7 Crowns!! so I had to give it up! I pay the Doctor 4 s 2 a day for Betta & myself this includes every thing save rent & as things go this is very cheap for I am well taken care of—

We are just in the fine spring— vegetables & fruit are good & plentiful & the weather divine but I cant get about as I used to do, yet I do walk in Cab in & to some nice place where I walk & see the mountains & after 1 & 2 hours I find another Cab to take me home